

# DIAKONOS AND DOULOS AS CONCEPTS OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP IN MARK 10.43-44: A SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC READING

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## ABSTRACT

In Mark, the life of the disciple is presented as being essentially continuous with that of Jesus. A disciple is one who is able to become a Diakonos and Doulos, which come with following Jesus. However, the disciples of Jesus in general and James and John in particular demonstrated a misunderstanding of discipleship when they made a request for seat of honor in Mk 10.35-42. This article demonstrates through a social scientific reading of Mark 10.43-44 that Jesus' teaching on Diakonos and Doulos is a call to true discipleship. This shall be achieved by studying the literature review on Mk 10.35-45 as a point of departure. The meaning of the word Diakonos and Doulos in Mk 10.43-44 shall be done as part of exegesis on the text and by reflecting on their historicity. The purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus' response to discipleship misconceptions is a call to true discipleship.

## KEYWORDS

Social scientific criticism, discipleship, Diakonos, Doulos, Mark

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## 1. Introduction

Social scientific criticism does not only study. First, the social aspects of the form and content of texts but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process. Second, the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions. Finally, the manner in which this textual communication was both a reflection of and response to a specific social and cultural context, that is, how it was designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social as well as literary and theological consequence<sup>1</sup>. Social-scientific criticism is clearly defined by van Eck who argues, 'no text can responsibly be interpreted if the social system that produced the text is not taken seriously or into consideration'<sup>2</sup>. This article is a social scientific reading of the text in Mk 10.43-44. The disciples of Jesus in general and James and John in particular demonstrated a misunderstanding of the core principles of discipleship when they made a request for seat of honor in Mk 10.35-42<sup>3</sup>. This article demonstrates through a social scientific reading of Mk 10.43-44 that Jesus' response to discipleship misconceptions is a call to true discipleship. This shall be achieved by studying the literature review on Mk 10.35-45 as a point of departure. The meaning of the word Diakonos and Doulos in Mk 10.43-44 shall be done as part of exegesis on the text and their historicity. The purpose here is to demonstrate that Jesus' response to discipleship misconceptions is a call to true discipleship.

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<sup>1</sup> Elliott, John Huxtable Elliot, 'Social-scientific criticism of the new-testament-more on methods and models', *Semeia* 35.1 (1986), pp.1-33.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest van Eck, *Introduction to the New Testament: The Synoptic Problem and Introduction to and Exegesis and Theology of Mark*, (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2013), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, 'Discipleship misconceptions: A social scientific reading of James and John's request for seats of honour (Mark 10: 35-42)', *STJ| Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 3.1 (2017), pp.185-204.

## 2 The Context of Mark 10.35-45

The text of Mk 10.35-45 is divided into two sections. The first section is about the request of James and John for the seats of glory, that is, their failure to grasp the message of Jesus and their misunderstanding of discipleship<sup>4</sup>. It is about the two sons of Zebedee who came to request for positions of pre-eminence in Christ's glory. Blaney, Hanson, Harvey suggest, 'they were either wanting places of honour at the messianic banquet, or places of honour and authority in a political messianic kingdom which they thought was about to appear'.<sup>5</sup> It is about the disciples' lack of understanding in the face of the truth and the teaching of Jesus. According to Anderson, they misunderstand that God's way of suffering and sacrifice for Jesus is identical with God's way for His disciples.<sup>6</sup>

The second section is about the response of Jesus to James and John's request for glorious seats in the previous section. Jesus teaches them the true essence of discipleship in response to their misunderstanding of discipleship. Johnson opines,

Jesus' teaching on humble service is nowhere better expressed than in Mark 10:38-45, and it is characteristic of Mark that the pattern is the Son of Man. He is not just an apocalyptic judge but the one who has healed the sick, embraced children and patiently taught His disciples.<sup>7</sup>

Above the failure and the misunderstanding of the disciples, the scripture according to Williamson affirms that Jesus' life was one of service and that His death was for others. His life and death were

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<sup>4</sup> Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, 'Servant leadership in Mark 10: 35-45 applied to African Pentecostal Christianity', (PhD diss., Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2016), 4.

<sup>5</sup> S.T.M Blaney, C. Hanson, and J.S. Harvey, 'Exploring the New Testament', in R. Earle (ed.), *Beacon New Testament Commentary* (Kansas City: Beacon, 1955), pp. 453-77.

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1976), p. 254.

<sup>7</sup> Sherman E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (New York, NY: Adam & Charles Black, 2nd edn, 1972), p. 178.

of peace, for the supreme service of Jesus Christ was the voluntary giving of His life as a ransom for many.<sup>8</sup>

It is about discipleship as a self-denying, self-risking part of lowly service for the redemption of the world. In contrast much of Christian life today, English states, 'it is about gaining a secure position in society, inviting others to join in such positions, doing little to change the structures of political and social life'.<sup>9</sup> There are two ideas in the text, lordship and service. Seeley says, 'the two stand in sharp contrast to one another. Indeed, it is precisely the tension between them that gives the passage much of its force. Unlike those who are regarded as ruling over nations, a disciple of Jesus should become a servant in order to be first.'<sup>10</sup>

Another point of discussion in the text is that Jesus teaches His disciples that the places of honour are not His to appoint. In addition Jesus can tell them what is expected of the disciples. They cannot be like the 'great one' of the world, who likes to rule over people. Instead, Evans says, 'the disciples are to seek opportunities of service'.<sup>11</sup> The disciples according to Geisler are instructed in humility and in service.<sup>12</sup> They are challenged to a radical and paradoxical form of leadership, and Jesus is the ultimate example through His suffering and death.<sup>13</sup>

The death of Jesus is not only the supreme example of what it means to be 'Great' in the kingdom of God, according to Stein it is being a servant and slave of all. It is also the once-for-all sacrifice by which He vicariously ransomed humanity from sin and death.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Lamar Williamson Jr, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), p. 190.

<sup>9</sup> Donald English, *The Message of Mark* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> David Seeley, 'Ruler Ship and Service in Mark 10:41-45', *Novum Testamentum*, 35.3 (1993), pp. 234-50.

<sup>11</sup> Craig A Evans, Mark 8:27-16:20: *Word Biblical Commentary* 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> Norman L Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), p. 73.

<sup>13</sup> John C. Hutchison, 'Servant-Hood: Jesus' Countercultural call to Christian Leaders', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166.1 (2009), pp. 53-69.

<sup>14</sup> Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Louisville, Kentucky: Baker Academic, 2008), p. 489.

Jesus illustrates His love and passion for humanity through redemption by His blood on the cross. He demonstrates discipleship is about saving the lost and healing the sick. Jesus shows His disciples that discipleship is to lay down His life for the sake of others.

The point here, for Powell, seems to be that ‘discipleship is a relationship established by the call of Christ and defined by His own faithfulness, not by any merit that can be attributed to the disciples themselves’.<sup>15</sup> In conclusion the text is about two reprimands from Jesus to His disciples. According to Henry, ‘the reprimands Jesus gave to two of His disciples for their ambitious request. The reprimand He gave the rest of the disciples for their uneasiness.’<sup>16</sup> The next section of this article discusses Jesus’ response to discipleship misconceptions.

### 3 The Meaning of Diakonos in Mark 10.43

οὐχ οὕτως δέ ἐστιν ἐν ὑμῖν· ἀλλ’ ὅς ἂν θέλῃ μέγας γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν, ἔσται ὑμῶν διάκονος.<sup>17</sup>

‘But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister’ (Mk 10.43).

The word Diakonos (a transliteration of the Greek word διάκονος) in Mark’s Gospel is used first to describe the angels ministering to Jesus when He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan and was with the wild beasts (1.13). More significantly, it is used by Jesus to describe the essence of discipleship: ‘If anyone wants to be first, he will be the last of all and the servant of all’

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A historical, literary, and theological survey*. (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2018), p. 142.

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Henry, *The New Matthew Henry Commentary* (M.H. Manser (ed); Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 1594.

<sup>17</sup> The word διάκονος refers to the one who renders a service to another, an attendant, servant (see R.H Mounce R.H. & Mounce W.D, *Greek and English interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV)*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2008), p 1041).

(9.35) – whoever wants to be great among you will become your servant) – for the son of man did not come to be served but to serve (10:43-45). It is the way of life that is clearly modelled on Jesus' own. As such it is not surprising that the word eventually came to designate the first ministers of the Jesus community.<sup>18</sup>

The word, Diakonos, which is transliterated in our English Bibles, Deacon, is simply the Greek word servant. Abrams says that it refers

both to appointed servants elected by the church to specific tasks and of unelected servants who served the Lord in a general sense in a local church. The noun Diakonos is used thirty times in the New Testament, and in only five of those does it refer to a specifically appointed servant.<sup>19</sup>

The word Diakonos has something to do with ministry. Taylor suggests:

they are used mainly to express the varieties of personal helps to others (i.e., serve, support, deacon, service, helper, assistant, and servant). In summary, it has been shown that the first-century understanding of servant refers to voluntary, humble service for others that may be demonstrated in numerous ways.<sup>20</sup>

Russell adds, 'It refers to the servant of someone or the servant of a master. Diakonos is the root word for deacon, a position of servanthood in the body of Christ.'<sup>21</sup> The concept of a deacon according to Jankiewicz was familiar to first-century society,

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<sup>18</sup> See Sabin, Marie. 'Women transformed: The ending of mark is the beginning of wisdom', *crosscurrents* 48.2 (1998), pp. 149-68.

<sup>19</sup> Abrams III, C.P., A Biblical Look at Deacons, (accessed online at <https://www.bible-truth.org>), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Jay Taylor, 'Servant Leadership'. *Encounter* 1.2 (2004), pp. 1-12.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Russell, 'A practical theology of servant leadership', (Virginia: Regent University, 2003), p. 4.

referring primarily to household service.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Deacon is the word which the church derives its titles or ecclesiastical offices of ‘minister’ and ‘deacon’, both of which are envisaged as servants of the saints and of those who are in need. Indeed, the word Diakonos was used often in the first century to refer to those who performed the menial task of waiting on tables.<sup>23</sup>

The word Diakonos literally means ‘someone who waits at the table’, referring to the person who renders service during a meal as depicted in Jesus. Implicit in the usage of the word are lessons for disciples to wait at the table and serve others instead of sitting at the head-table and seeking to be served. The English word ‘deacon’ is derived from Diakonos, which is commonly used to describe a church leader. Diakonos is also significant because it is used to describe Jesus’ lessons about discipleship. Embedded within the use of the word Diakonos is the emphasis on humility and selfless service. Hence, in Jesus’ terms, discipleship is not about power and personal aggrandizement, but about offering oneself in service to others.<sup>24</sup> This is a service that is rendered free of charge, willingly without expecting something in return.<sup>25</sup>

In the words of Swamidoss,

a person who embraces Diakonos will have the mind of Christ, esteeming others better than himself/herself, looking out for their interests. Such a person, like Jesus, will live life not giving attention to their own interests, but to those of others. The

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<sup>22</sup> Darius Jankiewicz, ‘Phoebe: Was She an Early Church Leader?’, *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors* 85.4 (2013), pp. 10-13.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Allen Tinsley, *The Ministry of Service: A Critical Practico-Theological Examination of the Ministry of Presence and its Reformulation for Military Chaplains* (Lynchburg: Liberty University, 2012), p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Sen Sendjaya, *Personal and Organizational Excellence Through Servant Leadership* (New York: Springer International Publisher, 2016), p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Dub. McClish, ‘The Qualifications and Roles of Deacons and What About Deaconesses? 1 Timothy 3:8-13’, accessed online <https://bible.org> on 17 August 2017.

person will attend to someone's bodily needs and also in a broad sense, of service rendered to another person quite generally.<sup>26</sup>

Jesus never sought reputation or equality with God but he humbled himself until the death of the cross for the sake of humanity. The disciples who embrace Diakonos will endeavor to do the same by sacrificing for others instead of being about themselves. Service to others and for others is the essence of the word Diakonos.

#### 4 The Meaning of Doulos in Mark 10.44

καὶ ὃς ἂν θέλῃ ἐν ὑμῖν εἶναι πρῶτος, ἔσται πάντων δοῦλος.<sup>27</sup>

And whosoever of you will be the greatest, shall be servant of all' (Mk 10.44).

A second term, Doulos (a transliteration of the Greek word δοῦλος) is the concept of a bondservant or slave.<sup>28</sup> The ancient Greeks considered independence and personal freedom to be among the highest of human rights. Slavery involved the subordination of one's will to that of another, the Greeks felt revulsion and contempt for a slave; subordination was debasing and

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<sup>26</sup> Swamidoss, A. W, 'Diakonia as Servanthood in the Synoptics', *Indian Journal of Theology Calcutta* 32.1-2 (1983), pp.37-51.

<sup>27</sup> The word δοῦλος refers to a servant of various degree (see R.H Mounce R.H. & Mounce W.D, Greek and English interlinear New Testament (NASB/NIV), Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2008), p 1047).

<sup>28</sup> Slavery did not directly form part of the great doctrinal controversies, nor did it visibly play any deciding role in the politics of the day. Yet it was perhaps more relevant to the ordinary person than any other issue. Slavery – the ownership and domination of one human body by another – influenced every aspect of life in the Roman world and was one of the most influential social institutions in defining one's identity. One was either a slave (or an ex-slave) or free (see Chris, L. de Wet, *Preaching bondage: John Chrysostom and the discourse of slavery in early Christianity*, (California: University of California Press, 2015), 2.)



contemptible'.<sup>29</sup> In an even stronger sense, the term 'slave' refers to obligatory subjection to the will of the master and absolute obedience to his commands. The slave's work could cover a wide range of activities, and the status of the slave was completely dependent upon that of the master. There were some benefits afforded to the slave, namely, the master's provision for his or her needs and the potential to accumulate rewards.<sup>30</sup>

Slavery seems to have been a common practice in many ancient societies such as Egypt, China and the Middle East. Most slaves originated from the spoils of war, kidnap or voluntarily to pay for debts. The treatment of slaves varied in the ancient world, but in most cases, slaves were the property of the master, with little or no rights or status. This meant that many were treated harshly, although most ancient societies had some laws to regulate slavery.<sup>31</sup> The institution of slavery was, of course, ubiquitous in the Roman Empire. Rome was a slave society, in that 'many of the accomplishments of the upper classes depended upon the leisure time which accompanied the exploitation of a servile labour force'? It should be noted, however, that although slavery was practiced throughout the empire, not all societies were necessarily 'slave societies' in this sense. Slavery was practiced in Palestine by both Jews and non-Jews.<sup>32</sup>

The proportion of slaves absorbed by domestic service must at all periods have been considerable, for, by and large, personal servants were always slaves, and they were employed in numbers which by modern standards seem very lavish. Slaves were, moreover, employed by persons of relatively humble means. In the fourth century, even the poorest of those who paid war tax, peasant farmers with a holding of six or seven acres, might well own a maidservant. Private soldiers in the Roman army quite commonly owned a slave or two. In slave societies, the dominant social groups

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<sup>29</sup> Bill Thompson, 'Servant, Leader, or Both? A Fresh Look at Mark 10:35-45', *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 9.2 (2015), p. 54.

<sup>30</sup> Jay Taylor, 'Servant Leadership'. *Encounter* 1.2 (2004), pp. 1-12.

<sup>31</sup> David Meager, 'Slavery in Bible Times', *church society*, 102.1 (2006), pp. 1-3.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Ann Beavis, 'Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8)', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.1 (1992), pp. 37-54.

depended far more upon the wealth generated by slave labour. In their large-scale units of production, it was more difficult for enslaved individuals to achieve freedom, much less enter the slave-owning class. Above all, in slave societies, slavery became the normative model of social relationships at the centre of economic production. It was the dual *location* of slaves, at the centres of both production and power that provided the key to understanding the emergence and maintenance of a slave society.<sup>33</sup>

This term is used literally to denote a slave (Col. 4.1, etc.), but it is also often used metaphorically of a Christian in reference to God or Christ (Rom. 1.1; Phil. 2.7, etc.). The term *Doulos* occurs 124 times in the New Testament. In 10.44, however, believers are exhorted to be slaves. The word translated ‘slave’ in 10.44 is from the Greek *δούλος*, which, though incorrectly translated as ‘servant’ by the King James, Geneva, and various other Bibles,<sup>34</sup> is most appropriately conceived of as ‘one who is subservient to another’.<sup>fn</sup> When used in the New Testament, *Doulos* conveys a profound meaning. Whereas the first-century servant was a wilful party in the transaction of service, the slave was ‘owned by another and possessing no rights except those given by his or her master’. With such a strong slave motif inherent in the meaning of *Doulos*, it is little wonder that this word is often used in reference to human’s relationship with God (e.g. Rom. 6.22; 1 Pet. 2.16; Jas. 1.1). Admittedly, though, it is also frequently utilized to describe the believer’s relationship with others, as in the case of Mk 10.44.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: a History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> NT scholars have tended to overlook or to gloss over the servile status of the *δούλος* although they are stock characters. Biblical interpreters well know that, in NT Greek, *δούλος* almost invariably means ‘slave’ as opposed to ‘hired servant’; nevertheless, they characteristically translate this word as ‘servant’ when it occurs in a parable (see Marry Ana Beavis, ‘Ancient slavery as an interpretive context for the New Testament Servant parables with special reference to the unjust steward (Luke 16: 1-8)’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.1 (1992), pp.37-54).

<sup>35</sup> Tinsley, Mark Allen. *The ministry of service: A critical practico-theological examination of the ministry of presence and its reformulation for military chaplains*, (Lynchburg: Liberty University, 2012), p. 48.

Doulos is the most frequently used word for ‘servant’ in the New Testament both in literal and figurative sense. Literally speaking, the word simply denotes the natural condition of those who live as slaves to their masters. However, contrary to the common understanding, the use of the word in the Bible refers to the notion of subjection without the idea of bondage. The same emphasis is also found in the figurative use of the word in the New Testament. The word was frequently used metaphorically to describe positive spiritual, moral, and ethical conditions (i.e. in bondage of God) as well as negative connotations (e.g. in bondage of sin or corruption). On the whole, while the word was often taken in its strongest sense to mean a slave who gives himself up to another’s will in disregard of his own interests, it signifies a voluntary act of subordination performed in the context of Christian love for God and others. This voluntary subordination is manifested in the willingness to assume the lowliest of positions and endure hardship and suffering on behalf of other people.<sup>36</sup>

Donahue and Harrington states that the phrase ‘slave of all’ is deliberately paradoxical. A slave usually belongs to one owner and does the bidding of that one owner. Slave was on the lowest rung of the social ladder. The owner bought and sold slaves like household goods. Doulos was a bond slave who served the master without will or question. A slave had no rights or privileges, no wants or desires, only the commands of the master. By recommending that His followers become the ‘slave of all’, Jesus underlines His ideal of universal service toward others.<sup>37</sup> Burge and Hill say, ‘the idea of a “slave”, a position of absolute inferiority in the ancient world’,<sup>38</sup> being ‘first’ was as paradoxical as the idea of a camel going through the eye of a needle (Mk 10.25).

The first shall be slave of all; service is not merely in title but in attitude and deed, for this is the nature of the Son of Man

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<sup>36</sup> Sendjaya, *Personal and Organizational Excellence Through Servant Leadership*, p. x.

<sup>37</sup> John R Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), II, p. 313.

<sup>38</sup> G.M. Burge & Hill, A.E., 2012, *The Baker illustrated bible commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Bakerbooks, 2012), p. 1036.

Himself.<sup>39</sup> Servant denotes a worshipper of God (Ps. 34.22), or one called by God to a special service (Rom. 1.1). 'To be the servant of the rest' refers to a person who serves others. Being 'First' refers to the one who is most important or the leader and 'slave' refers to the one who occupies the lowest rank or status.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, any leader who wants to occupy an important high position must first occupy the lowest position by serving others. In addition, the one who wants to be great and important shall be the servant of all. The leader that desires to be truly great and important needs to do well to all. Those who are most useful will not only be the most honoured later, but also the most honourable now.<sup>41</sup>

The slave, however, was one who did not have the right to refuse. The slave's entire life was at the disposal of the master. This is Christ's expectation of His disciples. In Doulos the stress is on the slave's dependence on his lord. Given the underlying meaning of the critical words, the text indicates that greatness in the kingdom of God does not come through power or authority but rather through service. These passages speak of love, which according to Russell means utterly 'selfless service – the willingness to fill the most humble and menial tasks of service to one's fellows'.<sup>42</sup>

## 5 A Call to True Discipleship

The literature review on Mk 10.35-45 demonstrates that the text is about discipleship understandings and misunderstandings. In the first part, that is, Mark 10.35-42, the disciples of Jesus demonstrates their shallow understanding of what discipleship is in making their request to Jesus to sit one on the left and the other on the right. In the second part Jesus respond to the discipleship misconceptions by teaching them two words Diakonos and Doulos. The teaching of

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<sup>39</sup> Sherman E. Johnson, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (New York: Adam & Charles Black, 2nd edn, 1972), p. 180.

<sup>40</sup> Robert G Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, 'A Translator's Handbook on Gospel of Mark', (New York: United Bible Societies, 1961), p. 140.

<sup>41</sup> Henry, *The New Matthew Henry commentary on the Whole Bible*, p. 1594.

<sup>42</sup> Russell, 'A Practical Theology of Servant Leadership', p. 4.

Jesus on these two words are a call to true discipleship in mark. The disciples of Jesus must be ready to familiarise themselves with the two concepts if serious about discipleship.

The first concept, Diakonos is considered a call to true discipleship in this article because it is a concept of servanthood. Diakonos calls on the disciples to engage in ministering to others than to self. It is a call for helpers in ministry. Diakonos demonstrates a kind of discipleship that is marked by serving others at the table than to be served by others. It calls on disciples to be humble servants than to be proudly servants. The concept of diakonos is also about ecclesiastical offices like deacons and ministers. They too are called to a true discipleship. On a lighter note diakonos is also about household service.

The concept of Doulos is considered a call to true discipleship in this article because it is about the lowliest position that one can take in society. Slaves occupied a low social status and were subjects of their own masters. In ancient world and on a negative sense they were properties of their masters. The word Doulos has something to do with enduring hardships and suffering in life which is something Jesus has done. Hence, he did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. A slave is someone who could not say no to their master. In this context, a disciple of Jesus is the one who obey the words of Jesus. Doulos calls on disciple not to be great than their master, instead to be dependent on their master.

Both Diakonos and Doulos are concepts of true discipleship in Mark. In Mark the life of the disciple is presented as being essentially continuous with that of Jesus.<sup>43</sup> A disciple is one who is able to willingly accept the dislocations and disorientations, which come with following the Son of Man.<sup>44</sup> Discipleship means to follow the way of being with others that may lead to suffering and death. Suffering is not an end in itself, but the consequence of a

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<sup>43</sup> Gregory Lee Waybright, 'Discipleship and Possessions in the Gospel of Mark: a Narrative Study', (Milwaukee: Marquette university, 1984), p. 287.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew* (Vol. 80; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 150.

life-praxis of solidarity with the outcasts of society.<sup>45</sup> Discipleship for Mark is not construed as assent to a series of faith propositions or the full acquisition and understanding of divine mysteries. It is predicated on becoming connected with Jesus by following Him after His call and acting like Him because He is the manifestation of the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>46</sup> Becoming a disciple of Jesus meant taking up your cross and following Him into non-violent warfare against the spiritual powers of evil.<sup>47</sup>

The first indicator or criterion of true discipleship originates from Jesus' first bout of preaching on the new ethic of discipleship in Caesarea Philippi (8.34). It sets a very high standard for discipleship, calling for a profound commitment to Jesus. The summons to deny oneself, take up one's cross, and follow Jesus emphasizes the extremely costly nature of true discipleship. For a true disciple there is no room for any other allegiance or fidelity apart from one's devotion to Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

Discipleship is not only about hearing the words of Jesus on suffering but also to act upon the words so that others may follow.<sup>49</sup> Mark has a unique description of the disciples; rather than idealise the first followers of Jesus, he seems to highlight their weakness and failure. They often appear confused and baffled; they misunderstand Jesus and recoil before the message of the cross.<sup>50</sup> The reason for the confusion of the disciples is that for the Markan Jesus the kingdom is a new inclusive household. This new household is opposed by the temple. In Galilee it seems that the

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<sup>45</sup> Mark S. Medley, 'Emancipatory Solidarity: The Redemptive Significance of Jesus in Mark', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 21 (1994), pp. 5-22.

<sup>46</sup> Ahearne-Kroll, Stephen P. 'Audience Inclusion and Exclusion as Rhetorical Technique in the Gospel of Mark', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 129.4 (2010), pp.717-735.

<sup>47</sup> Boomershine, Thomas E. 'Mark: Forming Disciples for the Way of Peace', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 38. 6 (2011): p.405.

<sup>48</sup> Nicholas Christopher Cox, 'Disciples and Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark, with Particular Reference to Mark's Contrast Between Male and Female Disciples' (PhD diss., Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2009), p. 81.

<sup>49</sup> John R Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2002), II, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1984), p. 36.

new household and the disciples succeed in replacing the kingdom but not in Jerusalem. God's kingdom which was announced as being near has drifted from the horizon.<sup>51</sup>

The conflict between Jesus and the disciples and that between Jesus and the authorities interweave, interpret and illumine each other. The disciples like the religious leaders, fail to grasp the essential nature of God's boundary-shattering reign. This nature expresses itself in a concept of messianic authority oriented not to power over others, but power exercised to spread holiness and life to a world locked in Satan's grasp. Both the disciples and the authorities stand to lose much in such a kingdom; they both fail to grasp the paradoxical truth driven home time and again by the Markan Jesus through his teaching, healing, and suffering. The truth is that only by losing one's life to the powers of the world which stand opposed to God can one save it.<sup>52</sup> It was truth to be understood only through the paradox of a different value system. Hence, Jesus' closest followers found the message of suffering, servant-hood and sacrifice difficult to accept.<sup>53</sup>

It involves cross-bearing, suffering, preference for the lowly and losing one's life. The disciples resisted and rejected; confused and fearful, they lacked understanding and failed to the utmost degree. They are drawn to Jesus, but do not understand what following the suffering Son of Man means. Although Jesus speaks about the suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection of the Son of Man the disciples do not understand these; instead they ask for special places of honour.<sup>54</sup>

Servanthood as taught by Jesus in Mk 10.44 is a call to true discipleship. Jesus is said to his disciples,

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<sup>51</sup> Ernest van Eck, Introduction to the New Testament: The Synoptic Problem and Introduction to and Exegesis and Theology of Mark, (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, 2013), p. 85.

<sup>52</sup> James Hanson, 'The Disciples in Mark's Gospel: Beyond the Pastoral/Polemical Debate', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 20.1 (1998), pp. 128-55.

<sup>53</sup> John C. Hutchison, 'Servant-Hood: Jesus' Countercultural call to Christian Leaders', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 166.1 (2009), pp. 53-69.

<sup>54</sup> T. Nicklas, 'The Crucified Christ and the Silence of God', in Karakolis, C, Niebuhr, K.W, Rogalsky, S (eds), *Gospel Images of Jesus Christ in Church Tradition and in Biblical Scholarship* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), pp. 349-72.

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whosoever of you will be the greatest, shall be servant of all' (Mk 10.44).

This is a call to true discipleship that the disciples of Jesus need not to lead others by lording over them and exercising authority but by serving others. Jesus does not only make this call but exemplifies it as well 'for the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mk 10.45).

## **6 Conclusion**

This article has demonstrated through a social scientific reading of Mk 10.43-44 that Jesus' response to discipleship misconceptions is a call to true discipleship. The literature review on Mk 10.35-45 demonstrated that the text is about discipleship misconceptions and the teaching of Jesus on true discipleship. Jesus taught the two concepts of true discipleship in contrast to discipleship misconceptions, that is, Diakonos and Doulos. Diakonos is a call to a life of serving others than self and Doulos is a call to become a slave of the master, Jesus. Both Diakonos and Doulos in Mk 10.43-44 are a call for a disciple to follow on the footsteps of Jesus and live a life of enduring hardships and suffering. This life is exemplified by Jesus himself because he did not come to be served but to serve others.